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WHOLE No. 414

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## SIGHT READING<sup>1</sup>

Most students, and, I am afraid, some teachers, regard the operation of reading Latin or Greek at sight as a more or less magical performance. They think that the sight passages on the College Entrance examination papers should be prepared for by a special kind of class-room practice, different in kind from that employed in dealing with the required reading. They are, perhaps, seduced by the Lorelei of 'rapid reading', wherein a class is hurried by the teacher over—not through—large portions of text, and accumulates about as much reliable knowledge as does a party of Cook's tourists at Pompeii.

Now this is a pity, because reading at sight is a valuable and strengthening experience when it is correctly done. But it cannot be so done unless the teacher founds his method on a paradox—first, that there is no such thing as sight reading, and, secondly, that all reading should be sight reading.

When we say that there is no such thing as sight reading, we mean, of course, that no one can be expected to apply to the solution of a problem knowledge which he has not already gained. He cannot invent paradigms as he goes along, or grasp brand new rules of syntax by intuition, or know the meaning of words whose elements give no clue to their connotation. To be sure, an intelligent reader will interpret many a subjunctive which he may be unable to label with its official tag, and he can infer the meaning of some words from context or derivation, but this does not contradict the original statement. He could not deal with the subjunctive at all if previous experience had not given him a conception of the significance of that mood, and he could not guess the meaning of a word if he did not have knowledge of its root-meaning or formative elements, or if the context did not proclaim just what was needed to fill the gap. If neither of these helps were adequate, we should tell him the meaning to begin with. To ask a pupil to read at sight is really to say to him, 'Apply to this passage here and now the knowledge which you have already gained', in contrast to the implication, when lessons are given to be prepared in private, that he will consult dictionary, Grammar, and notes (and nothing else) before he makes public the result of his labors. The only difference—and it is not a material difference—is that the teacher is at hand to supply defects of memory and to stand in place of lexicon and Grammar. That is to say, this should be the only difference. As a matter of fact, there is often a wide gap between the

two processes, because the teacher in his haste will tell both too much and too little, and because the pupil at his leisure works by bad methods, either from laziness or because he has not been taught in the class-room how to attack a passage with a reasonable certainty of discovering the sense.

Thus we arrive at the second member of the paradox: while there is no such thing as sight reading, considered as a unique process applicable only or mainly to passages for which the student is not allowed to consult a dictionary, yet his first onslaught on a passage should always be made as if the reserves of notes, Grammar, and dictionary could not be called up. He must nerve himself to the task as if he were a surgeon in the operating-room, to whom his medical library is now only a remembered source of present strength. *Nunc animis opus, o tiro, nunc pectore firmo!*

One who is made to do this is at once benefited in several ways. He becomes acutely aware that a rule in the head is worth two in the book, he is compelled to focus his attention sharply on the text before him, for it is his only source of information, and he is forced to make demands on his memory which he is not so likely to make if he may substitute reference to a vocabulary for the effort to recall a word once seen and half remembered. Finally, he is sharply reminded of whatever failings he may have in his working knowledge of forms and syntax.

If the foregoing statements are true, it becomes evident that our problem is not the narrow one of teaching pupils to read at sight: it is rather that of teaching them how to read on all occasions. Confronted by a sight-passage, a student is driven to observe the text more closely than when he is attempting to recite something which he has prepared with every aid at hand, as is proved by the astonishing fact—a fact which has received additional proof since these words were written—that candidates who take the papers of the College Entrance Examination Board often do the sight-passages much better than those selected from the required reading. But it is one thing to look, and another to see. The reader must know what to look for, and he must be equipped to recognize it when he finds it. There is not much use in telling a pupil to observe the forms of all words sharply if his knowledge of forms is uncertain. As a preliminary to reading, if one is just taking over a class which he has not taught before, a review of forms, including practice in the identification of forms gathered as they spring up in the text, is a kind of setting-up drill which is well worth while.

Put, assuming that forms have been adequately taught, and that every-day syntax is understood, how

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, at Hunter College, April 23, 1921.

is the reader to go to work? I am thinking now not of one trying to pass an examination, but of what should go on in the class-room of a teacher who is training pupils to read.

On most sight examination papers one is directed to read the passage through several times before attempting to translate. This is sound advice for one taking an examination, as it may provide him with a context which, even though hazy, may save him from absurd errors. In the class, however, I think this unnecessary, at least as a routine procedure: the pupil has no more need for the next sentence than had the Greek or the Roman reader for whom it was written. Even if the next sentence is designed to clarify the vagueness of the one before it, as when a *nam* points to fuller light as one advances, it is better to consider the first sentence narrowly before going on.

Let us suppose an ideal situation for the teacher to exercise his skill—a fairly long, complex sentence which the pupil confesses, after a preliminary canter, that he cannot read. How shall he proceed? According to the instructions contained in Professor Hale's notable treatise, *The Art of Reading Latin: How to Teach It*, he should examine the first word, without reference to what follows, and consider all its grammatical possibilities, then proceed to the next word, apply the same process, and so on, observing as he goes how word connects with word, until the whole structure of the sentence stands revealed. He accompanies this process with tentative translations, which he revises as the evidence accumulates, arriving at his complete interpretation by a process of trial and error, as it were. This has the advantage of calling up in review all that one has learned about grammar, and, of course, of making the reader painfully aware of what he has not learned. It is an admirable antidote to mental messiness, and it emphasizes a fact which many persons do not seem to realize, that the construction of every word is explained by some word which precedes or follows it in its own clause—that every word (expletives excepted) is geared into some other word in the sentence. In the hands of a skilful teacher it reveals the dramatic quality in the order in which ideas are presented—first, perhaps, the subject and object, like actors on the stage at the raising of the curtain, while the following words both supply the scenery and expound the plot. Nothing escapes: suspense is in the air until the last verb, lightning-like, illuminates and ends the scene. In spite of the patent virtues of this method, however, I should use it rather as a strengthening exercise than as an invariable routine. In the first place, I should always let a pupil translate, when he can, without demanding from him the whole rationale of the process, and reserve this more drastic discipline for occasions when he begins to be slovenly, or finds himself hopelessly entangled. I should do this for two reasons; first, because it is encouraging to read rapidly when one can, and, second, because I do not believe that even the Romans took in ideas word by word, any more than we do, but by groups of words, just as we recognize a human being as such without taking a biological

inventory of his parts. It may be worth while once or twice to note the relation of the words in *quae cum ita sint*, for example; but it swiftly passes into the blessed class of complexes which we recognize without the need of further analysis. In fact, a preliminary survey of a sentence, designed to discover such complexes, is, it seems to me, likely to yield results equally valuable with those obtained by playing the game rigidly according to Hale.

But, whatever method we may prefer, I think we shall agree that the first duty of the reader is to look at the Latin. That seems like a simple suggestion; but a somewhat long experience has convinced me that, simple as it is, it is a proceeding which many pupils do not automatically follow. What is the pupil to look for? Mainly for terminations, that he may recognize here an accusative, there a subjunctive, yonder an adverb; as one on entering a room goes through his mental 'Look who's here', as Tom, Dick, and Harry, Jane, Mary, and Paulina greet his gaze. The comparison is imperfect, because Tom and Mary are more like word-roots, while inflections tell us what the words are doing in the sentence; but, to escape from the bogs of simile, let me say plainly that the reader's first concern is rather with grammar than with vocabulary. In examining a strange machine we instinctively distinguish a wheel from a spring; then we notice how the gears mesh and where the levers are attached; finally, and only then, do we feel able to judge with any confidence what the machine is for.

Now, many a student knows, and acts upon the knowledge, that the subject of a finite verb is in the nominative case, and cherishes other maxims equally golden; but, while he will freely admit, if you choose to put it to him in that way, that every nominative not on special duty as adjective, appositive, or predicate noun—I hope you do not like the term 'attribute complement' any better than I do—is but a blighted being until it is wedded to some agreeable verb, that a well-bred genitive prefers to be chaperoned by a discreet noun, and that transitive verbs shrink from appearing in public without their objects, yet he is apt to display an appalling lack of social address in getting the right people together; as though a distracted hostess should try to solve the problem of seating her guests at dinner by pairing them off, man and maid, without introduction and without regard for affinity or preference. Just as any large company of people, left to themselves, will collect in groups, with here and there a solitary person, like an interjection of pain, restless and unattached, so the pupil must learn not only that a sentence has its committees and sub-committees, so to speak, but that there are signs by which he may determine who's who in the period. After he has identified the wooing subjects and the waiting verbs, and perhaps paired off the obsequious adjectives with the nouns with which they are at such pains to agree, he will begin to see that his sentence is like a train of cars on the New York subway, only rather more chummy than that, each with its own verb to act as motor, each linked to its fellow by some conjunctive word, and all, if you like, controlled by



the subject of the main verb, to wit, the motor-man in the front car—though I am aware that in certain points this comparison will not bear very close scrutiny.

But at least we may push the parallel a little farther. The normal and only safe way to understand the activities of the people in a train is to walk through the train from end to end. Otherwise you may forget who was luxuriating in the parlor car, who was dining, which was the fireman, and whether or not some charming young thing had been sitting in the smoker. The right perspective of a Latin sentence is most surely apprehended by taking the first word first, the second word second, and so on. In that way one soon learns that a nominative in clause *a* is no more likely to be the subject of the verb in clause *b* than is a man sitting in the back seat of the rear car likely to be aware of what someone in the car ahead is writing in his notebook. Of course ellipsis and repetition make exceptions of a sort; but in general we have made a great stride when we have induced a class to believe that a clause is what its name implies—a closed cell, living its own life, even though that life is in turn part of the life of some greater organism. I sometimes tell a class that complex sentences are all either eggs or sausages. Into the white of an egg the yolk is injected, as a relative clause may interrupt the continuity of some other clause which began before it and ends after it; or each clause may go on to its end without a break, when the thought crosses the bridge of the conjunction to the next clause, and devours that in turn.

There is no need to say much about the interrelation of words within the clause, partly because, when once the principle that the clause is a water-tight compartment has been grasped, the elements of the remaining problem are relatively few. The idea that words are looking for partners soon takes root, and the pupil easily learns that a subject inevitably links arms with the next verb that comes along in the same clause, provided that verb bears the proper insignia of number and person. He can be taught that doubtful datives and ablatives will nine times out of ten unmask as soon as the verb is reached, and, in the same way, that it is often well to pause at that verb, as on an isle of safety in a crowded street, and consider what is likely to come next. So many verbs have preferences in the way of case or mood to follow that it pays to study their facial expression before plunging ahead. Or say to the reckless reader, 'Suppose you found that word at the end of the last line on a page, what would you expect to find when you turned the page over?'. This is, of course, the basic idea in Professor Hale's treatise, and to this extent I think that his method is sanctioned by both logic and experience.

There is, perhaps, food for reflection on the disparity between the number of terms used in Grammars and the use which is made of many of the categories in actual reading. A boy's common-sense may, and generally will lead him to translate *requies laboris* correctly; but neither the name of that genitive nor anything in his experience is likely to relieve the impression that the construction is, to say the least,

whimsical. Not that it cannot be explained to him; but this particular phrase is, I think, one of the first instances where he has to break loose from the belief that the genitive is normally a sign of 'of' or of the possessive case. I do not believe in teaching principles in advance of their use when this can be avoided; but, if the occurrence of this phrase did happen to be the first time that the pupil had to be given a broader knowledge of the genitive, I should want to use the opportunity to reveal to him the fact that the genitive was the equivalent of many kinds of prepositional phrases used in English to modify nouns, rather than to distress myself deeply over his ability to label this particular genitive 'objective'. Similarly, I should teach him to observe closely what kinds of subjunctive went into English via the indicative without the aid of any auxiliary verb, and tell him that, if he met a strange subjunctive, he might with safety adopt any way of rendering it which the context seemed to demand, without being alarmed by the fact that here was a subjunctive which he could not tag. Let us teach the nomenclature of grammar, by all means; but let us teach with it and teach more emphatically those things of grammar which have actual bearing on understanding the Latin.

I have laid stress on the foregoing principles because there can be no growth in power without them. I would not weary you by the discussion of minor details, but there are three other points on which I should like to touch briefly.

First, while it is possible by a *tour de force*, as Professor Hale has proved, to make pupils read in the Latin order, and while they will naturally learn to do this when they have reached the stage of reading Latin, as someone says, without tasting it, I have found it much more practicable to follow the old-fashioned rule of *translating* first the subject with its modifiers, then the predicate, then the modifiers or adjuncts of the predicate. This adjustment must be made at some point in the process of translation, and I prefer to make it a matter of routine. I should vary this routine by occasional translations deliberately aimed to preserve the Latin order, when that order was necessary to secure right emphasis or to avoid tameness, and I should make some use of the metaphor as a convenient crutch; but I am convinced that for schoolboys, at least, the other way is better as a regular practice.

The other two points are attention to context and the use of the imagination. Attention to context is not, in my experience, to be had without persistent effort on the part of the teacher. Again and again we must point out that the Roman writer was not an imbecile, as our pupils would have us think, but that he had something to say. It is to establish a context that the writers of sight examination papers are directed to read the passage through several times before beginning to write. It might encourage our pupils to do this with more enthusiasm if they could be convinced of its importance by being shown English sentences whose drift was uncertain when read without a background. At any rate, the art of reading at

sight or otherwise is hardly worth acquiring unless it becomes the means of understanding the writer's thought. This granted, we may consider the part which imagination must play in the process. Somewhere in the passage will come an *x*—a word that the reader does not know, and cannot derive. Its form will show where it must be fitted in, but as a word it is an unknown quantity. Here imagination comes to the rescue, but not in the form of wild guessing. As science has posited the ether to explain phenomena inexplicable without it, so the mind which has grasped the context can create for itself something which shall connect the continents of thought on either side, and, so to speak, 'satisfy the equation'. I think the process is scientific; I am sure it is a truly intellectual process; and it seems to me that the teacher who can develop in his pupils sufficient mental voltage to produce a spark which can leap across the gap at such a point has given them his utmost gift—the gift of mental power founded on ordered knowledge.

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### THE SINON EPISODE IN VERGIL

The part played by Sinon in the story of the fall of Troy no doubt received attention among the early Greek writers. The cleverness of his strategy in persuading the Trojans to take the Wooden Horse into their city would be as attractive to the Greek writers as the manifold strategies of the crafty Ulysses. Sophocles wrote a play called *Sinon*, of which only the merest fragments have survived, so that we have no clue as to the way in which he developed the plot and character. But it is only reasonable to suppose that he made the story entirely creditable to Sinon and the Greeks. While we need not insist on the distinction, as a rule the Greeks saw nothing unworthy in cunning and strategy, whereas the Romans preferred open warfare as being the more honorable. Because of this difference, we may believe that Vergil took no more than the outline of the story from the Greeks, and gave it a development more in harmony with the Roman attitude. He uses Sinon as an example of the Greek type: *accipe nunc Danaum insidias, et crimine ab uno disce omnis*. This represents Vergil's point of departure, with which the remainder of the episode must correspond, and it is at the farthest remove from what the Greeks must have adopted. Quintus Smyrnaeus, writing four centuries after Vergil, says nothing that detracts from Sinon's character, but by implication praises him (12.388): 'For a brave man's part is to endure to the uttermost'. The Greek Tryphiodorus, writing in the fifth century A. D., shows signs of familiarity with Vergil's account; yet he says nothing that might be considered derogatory to Sinon's character. Indeed, he applies to him the Homeric line (stereotyped, to be sure), 'And taking courage the crafty hero answered him'. Vergil nowhere suggests that Sinon is a hero.

Aside from the general aversion felt by the Romans toward this trait of Greek character, another circum-

stance determined Vergil's treatment of the episode. The poet must justify the surrender of Troy and the flight of Aeneas, or his story will suffer. His hero may not be overcome in open, direct assault, but it is not to his dishonor if he falls before the cunning wiles of his opponent. His readiness to believe the story of an apparently helpless foe and to lend him aid may really add to his credit. We see in Book 3 that the Trojans receive their Greek foe Achaemenides. So, in Book 2, Aeneas and his Trojans are completely justified, for, through the snares and the cunning of perjured Sinon, through his tricks and feigned tears, they were captured whom not Tydides, nor Larisaeon Achilles, nor ten years and a thousand ships could subdue. Herein the larger purpose of the episode is clearly manifested.

The success of this larger purpose depends upon the art which Vergil employs in developing the incident. It is at this point that the poet has shown a skill which seems to the writer to have been inadequately recognized.

The entire episode is included within 142 lines, of which 111 lines comprise the speeches of Sinon. So we may rightly regard the effort of the poet as oratorical rather than dramatic. Early writers probably found the mutilation of Sinon, as copied by Quintus Smyrnaeus and Tryphiodorus, more suitable for a dramatic exhibition, but Vergil, following his oratorical inclinations, omitted this feature. The skill with which Vergil has worked out the Sinon incident suggests that he had some familiarity with the oratory of the Roman Forum, though it is not necessary to believe, as some have done, that he had any particular person in mind in this and other incidents, as Cicero, for example, back of his *Drances* in Book 11.

Sinon really makes four speeches, and in this fact the poet has shown his skill. A single speech of 111 lines would have proved too tedious for his listeners and would probably have failed in its purpose. Each speech has a fitting close. The first, which consists of but four lines, is hardly more than a prolonged wail. The psychological effect of the last line, *Dardanidae infensi poenas cum sanguine poscunt*, very naturally delays for the Trojans what Sinon professed to believe they would do. The effect is immediate and the Trojans' minds are turned and all violence is checked. The next speech, consisting of 29 lines, ends still more skilfully: *iam dudum sumite poenas: hoc Ithacus velit et magno mercentur Atridae*. Vergil shows keen perception of human nature, which perversely refuses to do what one's enemies would like to have done. The ending of the third speech, consisting of 37 lines, is exactly opposite to that of the second. For in the one case Sinon bids the Trojans inflict the punishment, while in the other he asks them to spare him. If these two endings had been reversed, the result would have been far less happy. Sinon did not plead for his life until he was sure of his ground. The fourth speech, of 41 lines, brings the climax. He has succeeded in carrying his listeners with him, and his final words suggest that which lies nearest their heart, namely, the waging of an offensive war on Greece.

We shall now look more closely at the various modes of appeal employed by the poet. The disarming of suspicion must necessarily come near the first of his endeavors. The general situation helps him in reaching this aim. The Greeks have apparently gone; Sinon is alone, with his arms tied behind him, and helpless. He promptly admits that he is a Greek, thereby forestalling their own charges. In his story he cites circumstances well known to his hearers. He calls for his own punishment. The effect of all this is to remove suspicion and to render his other purposes more readily accomplished.

The appeal to their pity is another motive played upon by the poet. His helpless condition would stimulate it. His first word, 'alas', the fact that he is cut off from land and sea, an outcast of the Greeks and hated by the Trojans, that he calls himself and his dear ones wretched, his tears and evident alarm, the story of his being marked as a victim, his despairing doubt as to whether faith still existed among mortals, his plea for mercy, and even so small circumstances as the poverty of his father and the fact that he had been sent to war *primis ab annis*, when he was naturally less responsible, all combine to stir up a feeling of compassion in the hearts of his listeners.

The appeal to the curiosity of the Trojans helps in getting his case before them. Their curiosity would be first aroused by his helpless situation. His first speech, in which he really tells little but suggests much, renders them still more curious about his lot. His artful introduction of Calchas and the breaking off in the middle of the story could not fail to provoke their curiosity to the limit; and, finally, at the right time and place, he cleverly and not too obviously brings the Horse into the story. In this connection we may note that Sinon holds the attention of the Trojans through the very natural interest of his story, involving as it does the experiences of the story-teller, his allotment for sacrifice, and his escape. It is all told so vividly that the Trojans, the writer of this article, and probably all other readers, while under the immediate spell of the story, get the impression that it actually occurred just as it was told. The story is such that even apart from the manner of telling it must hold the interest.

The appeal to truth has a magnetic effect. Sinon declares that whatsoever shall happen he will tell the truth, and, no matter how wretched fortune has made Sinon, she shall not also make him vain and deceitful. And later, by a sacred oath, which would be inviolable from the Roman point of view, he vows to tell the truth and even bases his claims for safety upon that condition. The magic power of truth works in a somewhat different way, but to the same end, when Sinon artfully weaves into his story certain facts which were accepted as true, such as the hostility between Ulysses and Palamedes, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in order to appease the winds, and the theft of the Palladium. *Haud ignota loquor* would not be restricted by the hearers in its application. The effect of truth is magical. It makes complete

falsehood take on the aspect of verity. In the fourth book, Fama understands this principle, for she mixes *pariter jacta atque infecta*.

Plausibility aids in the general effect. Since a human sacrifice had been offered in order that the Greeks might come to Troy, what was more plausible than the suggestion that their return from Troy must be brought about in the same way? So also the theft of the Palladium would incur the illwill of Minerva and, then, to restore themselves in her favor, it would be natural for them to return to Greece to take the omens over again. Likewise, it was plausible that the Horse was built to appease the offended Pallas and that it was made so large that it might not be taken into the city.

The natural tendency of men to believe that which they wish to believe is played upon by Sinon. Because Palamedes, though a Greek, forbade the war, and was an enemy of Ulysses, the Trojans would naturally sympathize with his cause and with that of Sinon, his reputed kinsman. They would be pleased to believe that through their efforts they had made the Greeks weary with the long war. They would gladly believe that Sinon was really the victim appointed for the safe return of the Greeks and that he had disturbed their plans by escaping. Nothing could please them more than the fact that Ulysses had been outwitted, that the theft of the Palladium had really brought discomfiture upon the Greeks, and that, if they would receive the Horse into their city, they would actually be able to take the offensive against Greece.

We have not yet exhausted the list of motives exploited by the poet in this episode. Some element of flattery is indirectly involved, though not developed to a great extent. Perhaps we may so explain Sinon's reference to the fact that the Trojans had wearied the Greeks in war, that they would in time be able to take the initiative against Greece. Vergil's sparing use of flattery in this episode may be justified on the ground that it would be easy to overdo the case and that a surer result is obtained by other means than flattery.

Perhaps the curious perverseness of human nature to desire that which one is forbidden or not to do that which he is bidden is played upon somewhat. So, when Sinon bids the Trojans to punish him, their natural reaction is to do the contrary, and, when they are told for what reason the Horse had been made so large, the contrariness of human nature suggests that in spite of every thing they will take the Horse into the city.

The working out of the Sinon episode shows a remarkable insight on the part of the poet into the laws of psychology. The various feelings and emotions played upon are delicately interwoven and never overworked. We may almost believe that, if Vergil had not been so backward, he would have made an effective pleader before the Roman bar. The episode maintains its interest throughout, motivates the next step in the story, affords a contrast of Trojan methods with those of the Greeks, and justifies the



hero in his abandonment of Troy. The part it plays in the economy of the poem, the Roman attitude displayed in the story, and all the known circumstances indicate beyond doubt that it is essentially Vergil's own creation.

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ARTHUR L. KEITH

### REVIEWS

Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech.

By Edward Sapir. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company (1921). Pp. vii + 258.

This book is in every way to be commended to the general reader. The presentation is zestful; on the score of clearness no reader will complain who realizes that he must contribute some effort if he wants to learn things. In matters of human conduct, such as speech, we are so much under the spell of fetishes and tabus that no writer can spare us hard work, if we are to wrench ourselves away from these and acquire a scientific outlook. Although Dr. Sapir says in his Preface (iii) that his main purpose is to show "what I conceive language to be", the general reader may be assured that the book is dependable, for the author's conception is evidently the result of wide study and scientific experience.

For the specialist also Dr. Sapir's book is of interest, for it contains not only those general statements upon which all students of language are agreed, but also well-grounded expressions of opinion upon matters still under discussion. As regards these latter, Dr. Sapir in almost every instance favors those views which I, for one, believe to be in accord with our best knowledge of speech and of the ways of man. As Dr. Sapir gives no bibliography, one cannot say how much of his agreement with scholars who have expressed similar views is a matter of independent approach. For instance, on page 57 the author develops what he justly calls "an important conception",—the "inner" or "ideal" phonetic system of a language: it is exactly the concept of *distinctive features* developed by the school of Sweet, Passy, and Daniel Jones (see, for instance, the Principles of the International Phonetic Association [London, 1912], or, for the practical application, S. K. Chatterji's Brief Sketch of Bengali Phonetics [London, 1921], especially 3). The same concept was developed (independently, I think) by Franz Boas (Handbook of American Indian Languages, 16) and by de Saussure (Cours de Linguistique Générale [Paris, 1916]). It is a question of no scientific moment, to be sure, but of some external interest, whether Dr. Sapir had at hand, for instance, this last book, which gives a theoretic foundation to the newer trend of linguistic study.

This newer trend affects two critical points. We are coming to believe that restriction to historical work is unreasonable and, in the long run, methodically impossible. One is glad to see, therefore, that Dr. Sapir deals with synchronic matters (to use de Saussure's terminology) before he deals with diachronic,

and gives to the former as much space as to the latter. The second point is that we are casting off our dependence on psychology, realizing that linguistics, like every science, must study its subject-matter in and for itself, working on fundamental assumptions of its own; that only on this condition will our results be of value to related sciences (especially, in our case, to psychology) and in the light of these related sciences in the outcome more deeply understandable. In other words, we must study people's habits of language—the way people talk—without bothering about the mental processes that we may conceive to underlie or accompany these habits. We must dodge this issue by a fundamental assumption, leaving it to a separate investigation, in which our results will figure as data alongside the results of the other social sciences. Dr. Sapir is here again in the modern trend; his whole presentation deals with the actualities of language rather than with hypothetical mental parallels. Especially well put is the following passage (9-10):

From the physiologist's or psychologist's point of view we may seem to be making "an unwarrantable abstraction in desiring to handle the subject of speech without constant and explicit reference to that basis. However, such an abstraction is justifiable. We can profitably discuss the intention, the form, and the history of speech, precisely as we discuss the nature of any other phase of human culture—say art or religion—as an institutional or cultural entity, leaving the organic and psychological mechanisms back of it as something to be taken for granted. . . . Our study of language is not to be one of the genesis and operation of a concrete mechanism; it is, rather, to be an inquiry into the function and form of the arbitrary systems of symbolism that we term languages.

Where Dr. Sapir falls short in this respect, he does only what all the rest of us have done. His definition of the sentence, for example (36), goes right back to the irrelevant subject-and-predicate notion of logic<sup>1</sup>, and is controverted by his own material, especially by his illuminating analysis of an English sentence (92-93), which is a good example of real linguistics. Had Dr. Sapir taken Meillet's definition (Introduction à l'Étude Comparée des Langues Indo-européennes<sup>2</sup>, [Paris, 1912], 339), he would have had a definition in terms of linguistics—a definition, that is, in accord with the first thirty-five pages of his book, with the whole tendency of his exposition, and, in particular, with his description of the *word*, which he himself seems to distrust, saying (35), "In practice this unpretentious criterion does better service than might be supposed", an apology which is really a powerful proof of correctness. I wish to quote with approval in this connection this statement (13-14), "From the point of view of language, thought may be defined as the highest latent or potential content of speech, the content that is obtained by interpreting each of the elements in the flow of language as possessed of its very fullest conceptual value", and with approval to refer to such passages as that on the parts of speech (123-124). On the other hand, such questions as

<sup>1</sup> Compare (98): "In every intelligible proposition at least two of these radical ideas must be expressed, though in exceptional cases. . . ."



"What, then, are the absolutely essential concepts in speech...?" (98), and such a passage as that on page 126 are out of accord with the author's own method in concrete problems. Such classifications as are attempted in the tables on pages 106-107 and 150-151 are similarly irrelevant, and are, indeed, invalidated by the author's own reservations. Like the rest of us, Dr. Sapir still pays tribute to aprioristic speculation which steals upon us in the guise of psychology; as his own approach is scientific, these false generalizations stand out from the rest of the discussion. Dr. Sapir has less of them than his predecessors; whoever is interested in the progress of our science will welcome his book as a forward step.

It is important, in the expansion of our science to its just province, that we should not commit the obvious fault of losing the historical accuracy of our predecessors; accordingly one regrets an error of principle in the historical part (190), where the author speaks as if the contrast of vowels in *foot*: *boot* were a matter of sound-change now in progress. Of course sound-change while in progress does not show itself to us in this or any other way; the contrast in question is due to a sound-change dated about 1700, followed by varying distribution of the resultant forms in Standard English (see Wyld, *History of Modern Colloquial English*, 238 f.). The understanding of the process of sound-change—of immense "diagnostic value" for psychology, ethnology, and, indeed, all forms of human science—is our most valuable heritage from the purely historical linguistics of the nineteenth century. It represents the phase of work in which our predecessors refrained from premature psychological interpretation, and it is probably premature psychological interpretation which leads Dr. Sapir to ignore this result<sup>2</sup>. This is hardly worth mentioning, were it not that we who conceive of a science of human speech must not justify a criticism with which rule-of-thumb workers are only too ready.

The chapter on How Languages Influence Each Other (205-220) is especially suggestive and interesting. The last chapters, however, which discuss the relation of language to other phases of human conduct, yield scant results (221-235, 236-247), because these other phases are as yet little known to science. "Race", for instance, is not a scientific concept, but a popular notion developed in rationalization of certain inter-ethnic contacts. And, as to other such matters, what can be said in the way of science, when (242) the style of Mr. George Moore receives praise?

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*Homeric Greek: A Book for Beginners.* By Clyde Pharr. Boston and New York: D. C. Heath and Co. (1920). Pp. xlii + 391.

Not long ago an English writer, in arguing that the French language and literature may well take the

place of Greek in the education of those to whom Greek is to be denied through the recession of its teaching in British Schools, made this exception:

Naturally nothing can take the place of Homer—this must be granted of course, and it is a pity that those boys who are to learn Greek should not read little else than Homer in that language, until they are sixteen or seventeen, for no amount of Attic Greek can compensate for the ignorance of *him*.

"The greatest fact of ancient Greece is the poetry of Homer", writes Professor John A. Scott at the beginning of his book on *The Unity of Homer*. These two utterances, with which the majority of American Hellenists will probably agree, make the appearance of Professor Pharr's book most timely. Here is the chance to give nothing but Homer to the boy or the girl who is to have but one year of Greek, and at the same time to provide for the progress of those who will continue its study. That Homer is a good introduction to the study of Greek Professor Pharr argues convincingly at the beginning of his book (in a discussion entitled *Homer and the Study of Greek*, xiii-xxviii; see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 14.114-118); he points out that the idea, although original with himself, was not new, but had been successfully put into practice in Europe, and that the effectiveness of his method has been proven by the use of the book in manuscript for several years before printing—we may add with a marked increase in the interest in Greek among the students. The book therefore needs no justification. We think that it will come into general use.

The amount of Greek offered to the beginner in the nearly eighty Lessons is rather small—only *Iliad*, Book 1, or about twenty pages of text. This also gives the student too dim a perspective of the scope and mass of the two Homeric poems. A few quotations from the rest of the *Iliad* and from the *Odyssey*—famous verses and passages, a simile or two, a brief description of a single combat, the pun of *Outis*—would increase both the interest of the student and his appreciation of Homer, without overloading the book.

Prose sentences, Greek-English and English-Greek, are offered in the first two-thirds of the Lessons, and then discontinued, the author suggesting that, if more are desired during the remainder of the first year's work, the instructor supply them. Exception to this is likely to be taken, for two reasons: the surest—although not the pleasantest—way of learning the forms and the structure of a foreign language is by translating one's own into that language; and the chief reason why we teachers of beginner's Greek need a text-book is not to formulate a method, but to save us the time required to select the text and construct the exercises.

The brief but adequate Grammar, which follows the Lessons (200-342), is prefaced by a few pages (200-206) intended to make easy the transition from Homeric to Attic Greek. The author has wisely compressed the syntax into about twenty-five pages, while giving about four times as much space to forms.

<sup>2</sup>Similarly, the statement about the umlaut-plural of German *Tag* (204) is wrong: it occurs in a number of dialects, and has parallels in Middle High German.

Copious lists of English derivatives are appended to the vocabularies. The book is excellently illustrated with familiar pictures.

The commentary on the text, which is very full, was apparently written *con amore*. Occasionally the tone may seem even too intimate; one queries whether, for example, the comparison of the clumsy cup-bearing of Hephaestus to the antics of Charlie Chaplin may not mar the effect of the majesty and grandeur which go so far to make up the connotation of the adjective 'Homeric'. But the numerous parallels from the Old Testament will meet with unqualified approval. The book as a whole is to be welcomed not only as a novel, attractive, and easy approach to Greek, but as a substantial help in increasing the firsthand knowledge of Homer, and so spreading the influence of the great poet.

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Hints on the Study of Latin (125 A. D.—750). By Alexander Souter. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. New York: The Macmillan Company (1920). Pp. 48. 20 cts.

In this brief and inexpensive monograph, part of a series of Helps for Students of History, those who are interested in Late Latin will find a convenient work for reference. Latin literature, as Dr. Souter states, may be conveniently divided into five periods: the Pre-Ciceronian, the Ciceronian, the Augustan, the Post-Augustan, and the Post-Suetonian. It is with the Post-Suetonian period that the paper deals primarily. The beginning of this period is placed at about A. D. 125 and the end, somewhat hazily, at 750. The writer regards A. D. 350-450 as the "Golden Age of the later Latin literature", as including careful writers of themes equalling in interest those of the classical period and surpassing that period in bulk.

The author aims to offer information regarding (1) general works on the subject of later Latin, (2) references to works concerning particular authors, and (3) certain word-usages in Late Latin which might puzzle the beginner.

Ten pages (10-20) are devoted to a discussion of repertoires of Late Latin texts, information concerning authors, dictionaries, Grammars, and subject-matter of the texts. Then follows a list (20-40) of the more important late Latin authors, arranged, chronologically, by centuries, with the best biographies, texts, commentaries, and translations, where available, for each author. The paper closes with a discussion of a few of the chief differences between Classical Latin and Late Latin, both prose and poetry, with regard to changes of grammatical constructions and meanings of words.

Dr. Souter has failed to mention a few rather well-known writers of the period; it is surprising, for instance, to find no reference to the eminent jurist

Papinian, and none to Dio Cassius, the historian. However, the short paper claims in no sense to be exhaustive; and it does accomplish its aim of giving to those beginning the study of Late Latin literature many valuable helps, in concise and compact form. It is to be hoped that Dr. Souter will undertake a similar service for the Latin literature of earlier periods.

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## DE REDEUNTE VERE

Dies verni redierunt,  
atrae curae diffugerunt,  
prati ridet gloria.  
Aer non iam tenebrosus,  
sol refulget generosus:  
veris haec victoria!

Glacie soluti fontes  
hospites relinquunt montes,  
donant valles gramine.  
Turba volucrum canora  
replet nemora sonora  
dulci modulamine.

Stabulum contemnunt boves,  
pascua revisunt oves,  
saliunt prae gaudio.  
Ager revocat colonos;  
toto die dulces sonos  
iam incudis audio.

Uti carceres leaenae,  
dudum portus sic arenae  
sunt invisae lintribus.  
Pueri ad rivos cantant,  
celeresque pisces captant  
hami catis artibus.

Rhombi<sup>1</sup> campis instaurantur,  
pilae<sup>2</sup>, bacula<sup>3</sup> parantur,  
trigon<sup>4</sup> regnat nobilis;  
ludit iuvenis, virescit,  
spectat senex, iuvenescit,  
turba plaudit mobilis<sup>5</sup>.

Vernum tempus, tempus dulce,  
frigidas medullas mulce,  
abige maestitiam!  
Corde libero canamus,  
Deo gratias agamus  
donanti laetitiam!

E COLLEGIO CAMPANO  
PRATOCANENSI, WIS.

A. F. GEYER

<sup>1</sup>rhombus, '(base ball) diamond'.

<sup>2</sup>pila, '(base) ball'.

<sup>3</sup>baculum, 'club' (for batting), 'bat'.

<sup>4</sup>trigon, 'game of (base) ball'.

<sup>5</sup>mobilis, 'excitable'.